



Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara

p/a Leo Ottplaats 39, 3031 CL Rotterdam
tel. 010-2141191 e-mail st.zelfbeschikkingwest-sahara@planet.nl
website: www.west-sahara.nl
Postbanknr. 9523538, t.n.v. St. Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara te Leiden
Ingeschreven bij KvK te Rotterdam onder nr. 24345432

De Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara voert campagne om het Saharaanse volk in staat te stellen zijn onvervreemdbare recht op zelfbeschikking uit te oefenen. Het Internationale Gerechtshof in Den Haag kwam in 1975 tot de uitspraak dat het volk van de toenmalige Spaanse Sahara in de gelegenheid gesteld moet worden zelf over zijn staatkundige toekomst te beslissen. De Marokkaanse invasie en daarop volgende bezetting heeft de Saharanen dit recht al meer dan 25 jaar ontnomen.

Nieuwsbrief West-Sahara nr. 7 – 18 juni 2004

Tenzij anders vermeld, zijn de *Engelstalige* berichten overgenomen uit *Sahara Analysis*, de nieuwsbrief van de *Western Sahara Campaign* in Groot-Brittannië.

AKTIVITEITEN IN NEDERLAND

MAROKKAANSE ANTI-DEMOCRATISCHE PRAKTIJKEN IN NEDERLAND – vervolg

Op 20 april 2004 gaf Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara een persbericht uit waarin zij haar verontwaardiging en verontrusting uitspreken over de antidemocratische praktijken van de Marokkaanse ambassade, die een openbaar debat over de Westelijke Sahara op donderdag 15 april probeerde te saboteren. De Marokkaanse ambassade zette het Koninklijk Instituut van de Tropen onder druk en protesteerde tegen de presentatie van een boek over West-Sahara (De laatste kolonie van Afrika; reizen door de Westelijke Sahara). Verder en zeker niet toevallig, werd het KIT gebeld door een Amsterdams deelgemeenteraadslid van Marokkaanse origine, die aan het KIT meedeelde dat als het debat doorgang zou vinden, er tweeduizend Marokkanen zouden komen manifesteren bij het KIT en de ruiten zouden komen ingooien.

Over deze kwestie heeft de Stichting een brief gestuurd naar het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. Het ministerie beperkte zich in haar antwoord met de mededeling dat ze "goede nota" had genomen van de brief, en dat het KIT voorzover wij wist geen bezwaar had aangetekend tegen de gang zaken. Gelukkig maar voor de vrijheid van meningsuiting in Nederland heeft de Stichting dat wél gedaan. Overigens heeft de Stichting ook de partij waartoe het deelgemeenteraadslid behoorde, aangesproken op het onaanvaardbare gedrag van betrokkene; er is een intern onderzoek ingesteld.

VISSEN IN TROEBEL WATER - vervolg Maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen?

Vier Nederlandse rederijen (Cornelis Vrolijk, Jaczon, Parlevliet en Van der Plas, W. van der Zwam & Zn) hadden hun voornemen bekend gemaakt om (opnieuw) te gaan vissen voor de kust van West-Sahara, bij monde van een woordvoerder van de PFA (in een artikel in de NRC van 12 februari 2004). De bevissing van de West-Saharaanse kustwateren wordt door de Stichting als illegaal beschouwd, als politiek onverantwoord en moreel verwerpelijk.

De Stichting heeft daarom bij de vier bedrijven hiertegen geprotesteerd, en heeft aan Minister Veerman van Landbouw, Visserij en Voedselkwaliteit gevraagd alles in het werk te stellen te voorkomen dat de vier reders hun visserijactiviteiten in dit gebied hervatten. De volledige teksten van de brief aan minister Veerman en aan de vier bedrijven zijn te vinden op www.west-sahara.nl.

Reactie minister Veerman

De minister reageerde na drie maanden op de brief van Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara.

Hij meldde de bijzondere juridische en volkenrechtelijke problematiek van West-Sahara te kennen, maar "het bijzonder moeilijk [te achten] om controle uit te oefenen op Nederlandse vissers die op basis van een private overeenkomst in deze wateren hun bedrijfsactiviteit uitoefenen. Wel heb ik deze groep al verschillende malen aangesproken op maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemerschap en voor deze specifieke zaak heb ik dat nogmaals gedaan."

Hiermee is de kous geenszins afgedaan. De Stichting wil graag van de minister weten wat verantwoord ondernemerschap ten aanzien van West-Sahara precies inhoudt.

INTERNATIONALE POLITIEKE FRONT

SCHERPE KRITIEK OP MAROKKO VAN AMERIKAANSE CONGRESLEDEN

Washington - Responding to claims made this week that Morocco needs to maintain control over Western Sahara, Congressmen Joe Pitts and Donald Payne today blasted efforts by the Kingdom of Morocco to dodge its international commitments in the name of its "territorial integrity." The Congressmen issued the following statement, on June 18, 2004.

"We are concerned about statements made this week that Morocco needs to maintain its 'territorial integrity' in order to prevent terrorists from threatening its borders. This idea is misguided and wrong. It's divorced from the reality on the ground there.

"Morocco has agreed to give the people of Western Sahara a vote on their future. And anyone who knows the situation knows that the Kingdom instead has dodged its commitment to the international community, begun to illegally exploit the natural resources of Western Sahara, and manipulated the international community. Let's be honest. This isn't about 'territorial integrity,' it's about money and power.

"The fact is the people of the Western Sahara, the Sahrawis, are pro-west and pro-democracy. They have their own elected leaders, including many women. They have their own democracy constitution. They have denounced violence. They are not terrorists. The Sahrawis have set an example when it comes to peaceful resistance and denunciation of terrorism to obtain their national goals - they have utilized the international system and the UN system to achieve a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

"The Moroccan conflict is not simply against the Sahrawi people but against international law. The October 1975 International Court of Justice decision stating that there are no legal or 'territorial sovereignty' ties between the territory of Western Sahara and Morocco.

"Western Sahara is a bastion of moderation and democracy in the midst of a region devoid of freedom. The United States and the United Nations have promised the Sahrawis a vote to determine their future. Yet repeatedly we have let them down. It needs to stop. The Kingdom of Morocco has every right to maintain its territorial integrity, but not over land that does not belong to it. Any decisions related to Western Sahara must be done at the ballot box in a free, fair and transparent referendum and not at the expense of freedom-loving people."

Congressman Payne is Ranking Member of the House International Relations Subcommittee on Africa. Congressman Pitts is Vice-Chair of the International Relations Subcommittee on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Human Rights.

SADR offers Morocco "wealth" and talks on security

(SPS, The Times)

Mohamed Abdelaziz recently declared the SADR ready to open direct talks with Morocco about the latter's "geostrategic, security and economic concerns". Meanwhile, in an interview with Carl Mortished of The Times, Mhamed Khaddad, POLISARIO Front co-ordinator with the UN, said that "democracy ... is not negotiable, but all the rest is negotiable. If that means giving part of our wealth to Morocco, we will do it."

Few observers will expect Morocco to take up these offers – at least not without pressure from its international backers. It is to be hoped that members of the UN Security Council and James Baker take note of the contrast between the tone and potential of these offers, and Morocco's continuing explicit rejection of any approach to resolving the Western Sahara conflict that allows the Saharawi people a free choice between integration into Morocco or independence.

GROWING PROTEST AGAINST MOROCCO'S EXPULSION OF 2 NORWEGIAN JOURNALISTS

After the expulsion of two Norwegian journalists from Morocco that were to cover the Kingdom's occupation of Western Sahara, protests from abroad and within Morocco is growing. Even the Moroccan Press Union expresses anger and an association of Moroccans residing in Western Sahara calls the expulsion unnecessary.

On 16 June 2004, two journalists of 'Stavanger Aftenblad', a leading regional daily in south-western Norway, were detained and later thrown out of Morocco despite having valid documents for committing journalistic work in the Kingdom. The two had an appointment to interview an opposition politician regarding the Western Sahara issue that same morning.

While the 'Stavanger Aftenblad' journalists only are the latest foreign journalists operating legally in Morocco to be expelled - in April this year, another Norwegian journalist was escorted to Mauritania while operating in Western Sahara - the current expulsion has obtained much international and local attention.

The France-based media watchdog group Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) strongly condemned the Moroccan policy of expelling journalists "who comply with all the necessary formalities." According to RSF, "it is obvious that foreign journalists are followed and their phones tapped. These arrests and obstruction of press freedom are extremely serious," the group says.

Even the Moroccan Press Union, which normally is controlled by pro-government journalists, has protested the incident. In a forceful statement, the union condemns this "reactionary act" that doesn't have "any legal basis." The Moroccan government needed to "take on its responsibilities regarding these illegal act" by the national police, the press association demanded. The strong-worded statement by the Press Union is a novelty in Moroccan public life. The national press is under fierce political control and the Union is dominated by pro-government representatives. Also, the issue of Western Sahara and acts by the police and the military forces are widely taboo in the national public debate. Breaking the ice on these taboos has earlier cost several journalists prison sentences.

The fact that these two organisations dare to speak out this way against the Moroccan Police is evidence that there are cracks emerging in the official Moroccan propaganda wall surrounding the issues of Western Sahara and freedom of speech, the Norwegian Western Sahara activist Ronny Hansen tells Afrol News. He agrees that the strong wording of the organisations' statements a unprecedented.

Norwegian Foreign Department: "unacceptable"

While the debate in Morocco has taken surprising turns, protests from abroad keep streaming in. First, the Norwegian Foreign Department protested the expulsion through its embassy in Rabat and Ministry spokesman Karsten Klepsvik called the decision "unacceptable". Also 'Stavanger Aftenblad' editor Tom Hetland strongly protested the expulsion of his journalists.

The Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara today joined the critics, saying the incident "again reveals the fundamentally reactionary nature of the Moroccan regime and that the same old paranoia remains reigning in their handling of anything remotely connected to the occupation of Western Sahara." The group adds that "anyone trying to shed light on this situation is brutally silenced."

The international community not should allow this to continue, the Oslo-based group today told afrol News. "We now expect both the Norwegian government and others to forcefully condemn the expulsion of the journalists

and demand free access of international observers, journalists and human rights workers to Western Sahara and Morocco," the group added. (Afrol News, 17 June 2004)

The Norwegian daily newspaper Stavanger Aftenblad in its edition of 17 June 2004, commented as follows. "This a serious and sad blow to the freedom of information. It also came unexpectedly, since our journalists had visas for writing general news reports in Morocco," says chief editor of Aftenbladet Tom Hetland.

A large part of yesterday was spent replying to inquiries from other media concerning the

Aftenbladet reporters in Morocco.

"It is very interesting to notice the international attention this has attracted. It proves that there is in fact attention on both the Western Sahara conflict and the conditions for news reporters. It probably won't have any effect on our employees, but the Moroccan authorities should notice that the obstruction of free news reporting has a price," says Hetland. He was yesterday interviewed by the news agency Associated Press, as well as by French broadcasting.

Jeune Afrique comments

The French magazine Jeune Afrique also published a large article about the expulsion in their internet edition. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, a new anti-terror law in Morocco has had adverse effects on the freedom of the press in the country. In some of the sentences against journalists, the authorities refer to, among other things, "threats to the territorial integrity" and "incitement to violence".

"Authorities will say this in many places. But in this case, we're talking about the freedom to convey information, part and parcel of the human rights in a democratic system. Democratic societies with freedom of the press have experienced that freedom of the press subdues rather than intensifies conflicts," says Hetland, who now will look into how to follow **up the matter**.

Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontieres) protests

The international press organisation Reporters Without Borders reacts very sharply against the expulsion of the two Aftenbladet employees from Morocco yesterday.

In a press release, the Paris- based organization writes that the arrest of Dommersnes and Refvem is a serious blow to the freedom of the press, and demands that the Moroccan authorities revoke their decision.

DE MUUR VAN SCHANDE

International demonstrations in Western Sahara

(ARSO)

April saw the second and third of a series of international demonstrations in front of the Moroccan defensive wall that divides liberated from occupied Western Sahara. In January a group of 150+ Italians marched to within sight of the wall, calling for its removal and self-determination for Western Sahara. Now on April 24th, a similar number of people from all over Spain and other European countries, marched to the edge of the minefields carrying banners reading "Another Sahara Is Possible". Photos can be seen at (http://spsrasd.info.site.voila.fr/sps_mur04.html)

Earlier a delegation of Australian parliamentarians, journalists and artists travelled to the site and unfurled a banner reading "Australians Against the Moroccan Wall". They were able to see and photograph a figure moving on top of the wall while they were there, and hope that his binoculars were strong enough to read their message!

BEZET GEBIED

Saharawi deaths in Moroccan custody

(Arso, AFAPREDESA)

Two Saharawis have recently died in Moroccan custody in suspicious circumstances. Hassan Hadi, a 38 year old Saharawi common-law prisoner, died in the "black prison" of El Ayoun, Western Sahara, on 18th May. Earlier that day his sisters had visited him and seen no sign of anything worrying about him. However the prison authorities announced that the next day that he was dead. His family lodged a complaint with the El Ayoun appeal court on 19th May, asking for an independent investigation into his death. Other detainees in the prison refused to return to their cells after their walk in the prison courtyard, as a protest in his memory and to raise concerns that the authorities were not telling the truth. On 23rd May his body was taken to Casablanca for an autopsy. Earlier, on 30th April, Chouihi Slimane, a 39 year old Saharawi died after being tortured in the Royal Gendarmerie station in Goulmine, southern Morocco. The police raided his house while he was away tending to his flocks of camels and sheep, so they assaulted his family. He was arrested on Friday 29th April, tortured at the police station and then taken in agony in a police jeep to the hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival. The autopsy in Casablanca declared him to have died from a cerebral haemorrhage and to have also suffered broken bones.

Six hundred people protested his death outside the Royal Gendarmerie station on 7th May, and his father declared that he will not bury his son until the truth about his death is known. Since then, several gendarmerie officers including the regional commander have been relieved of their functions for exercising insufficient control over their forces.

Amnesty Report

Amnesty International has just released its report on human rights in Western Sahara and Morocco in 2003, which continues to raise concerns including about torture in police custody, intimidation of Saharawi activists and the fate of "several hundred people who "disappeared" between the mid-1960s and early 1990s ... the vast majority were Saharawis". It can be read at <http://www.amnesty.org/>

NATUURLIJKE RIJKDOMMEN

Oil: Focus on the UK

(The Times, Arso, corresp.)

Wessex Exploration, a UK company based in London has recently been awarded a licence from the Moroccan government to survey for oil on land in occupied Western Sahara – specifically, in the "Tarfaya – Aiaun basin". As a result, Wessex has become the subject of an international letter-writing campaign. Hundreds of Saharawi solidarity activists from the UK and across Europe and beyond have contacted the company's director to ask him to suspend its activities in Western Sahara.

Wessex have responded to initial enquiries by saying that the UN allows oil exploration in occupied Western Sahara. However, the UN legal ruling from 2002 is careful to say that "further exploration" might be illegal if carried out against the wishes or interests of the people of Western Sahara. Details of the letter that campaigners have been sending to Wessex can be found at <http://www.arso.org>.

HUMANITAIRE HULP

Future aid programme to the Saharawi refugee camps announced

(Arso/WFP, APS)

The World Food Programme has announced a \$40 million aid programme to the Saharawi refugee camps for the period 2004-2006. The director of the WFP's regional bureau, Mr K. Adly, addressed Moroccan press stories of systematic abuse of aid by the POLISARIO Front thus: "the aid given by the World Food Programme to Saharawi refugees is not subject to any sort of misappropriation and reaches the beneficiaries". ECHO, the EU's humanitarian aid office, has also announced a €20 million aid package for the next 2 years.

It remains to be seen how much of the \$40 million budget will actually be available to the WFP. In the past, countries have repeatedly failed to contribute the full amount asked to the WFP's aid programmes for the Saharawi camps (and indeed for many of the WFP's programmes around the world). Nevertheless, these announcements are welcome and show that, despite the diplomatic stalemate, the world still remembers the Saharawi refugees.

CULTURELE ERFENIS

Culturele erfenis Dakhla bedreigd

(Arso)

The former fort of Villa Cisneros, now Dakhla, architectural remnant of Spanish colonialism, is threatened with destruction. The Moroccan occupying authorities intend to demolish it. The Saharawis consider that this building is part of their historical heritage and ask for the intervention of UNESCO in order to prevent its disappearance. Not only that, but a potential site for future tourism – which would remind visitors that Western Sahara has a separate history from Morocco – looks set to be denied to the Saharawi.